

# NEWS

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United States Department of Justice  
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey  
970 Broad Street, Seventh Floor  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

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***Ralph J. Marra, Jr., Acting U.S. Attorney***

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harr0610.rel

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## Jersey City Building Inspector Pleads Guilty to Extortion

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(More)

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<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nj/press/index.html>

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NEWARK – A former Jersey City building inspector pleaded guilty today to extorting corrupt payments from contractors, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr. announced.

David Harrington, 47, of Orange, pleaded guilty to a one-count criminal Information charging extortion before U.S. District Judge Susan D. Wigenton. Harrington is free on a \$50,000 bond pending sentencing, which is scheduled for Sept. 17.

At his plea hearing, Harrington admitted accepting corrupt payments in exchange for his agreement to expedite inspections of certain contracting projects being performed by a government cooperating witness between January 2004 and November 2006. Harrington admitted that he extorted the funds in two different ways.

First, Harrington admitted that he agreed to expedite inspections in exchange for having work performed on his personal residence, even though there was no cost associated with obtaining municipal construction inspections. Such work at his residence included, but was not limited to, laying a concrete driveway, completing siding repair, purchasing and installing a new heating, air-conditioning and ventilation system and other such services. Harrington also admitted that he extorted funds from a contractor by directing the contractor to – using the contractor’s own credit card – make a payment of \$1,079 over the telephone for Harrington’s “fire inspection certification” classes in exchange for his agreement to perform timely and expedited inspections.

The approximate amounts and value of some – but not all – of the payments, material and services, which Harrington admitted during the plea today, were: \$12,000 for materials for free work at Harrington’s residence, \$2,000 for the purchase of an ice maker, \$1,079 for the fire inspection certificate tuition, \$15,000 for the HVAC system, \$5,100 for the purchase and installation of an iron fence, \$2,012 for the rental of a Bobcat excavating machine, \$10,000 for time and materials for the driveway paving. Those items total more than \$47,000.

“This was a public employee entrusted with a high level of authority and discretion who abused that responsibility to fulfill his personal, greedy and corrupt needs,” said Marra. “Our investigation into the Jersey City construction code department will continue.”

Harrington admitted that he extorted these funds while he was employed as a Jersey City building inspector. Harrington admitted that, while serving in that capacity, he was responsible for, among other things, enforcement of the Housing and Property Maintenance Code and inspection of properties subject to housing code compliance.

The charge to which Harrington pleaded guilty carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. However, in determining an actual sentence, Judge Wigenton will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide

appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors, including acceptance of responsibility. Under the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, Harrington faces a probable range of between 30 and 37 months in federal prison. The judge, however, has discretion and is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Marra credited the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea. Marra also thanked the Jersey City Police Department's Special Investigation Unit, under the direction of Chief Thomas Comey, for its assistance in the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenny Kramer of the office's Special Prosecutions Division.

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Defense Counsel: Michael Armstrong, Esq., Willingboro